



# BEAULIEU HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No. 32 August 2017

## Editor's Column

### Past Meetings

On 12 May, the society made a **Visit to Gins Farmhouse** on the lower reaches of the Beaulieu River, by kind invitation of the residents, Julian and Holly Chichester. John and Anne Coles gave a talk on the long history of Gins. The talk and the slides will appear on the society website soon.

The Gins name probably derives from the construction in C13th by the monks of Beaulieu Abbey of a river dock. The dock would have had a hoist for unloading and loading goods from boats for onwards despatch to the monks' barn at St Leonards nearby. A word describing a device such as a hoist in old French was *engin*, abbreviated to *gyn* or *gin*. Hence the likely origin of the name. A modern day dock is still present.



Gins Farmhouse and the modern day river dock (top right)

### Forthcoming Meetings

Did you know jazz festivals were held at Beaulieu? On 29 September, the talk **Beaulieu and all that Jazz** will relate the surprising story of the jazz festivals held at Beaulieu over the years 1956-61. They were strongly championed at the time by Edward, Lord Montagu and, in several ways, were pioneering events

preceding the modern music festivals of today.

The talk will be given by Ken Robinson who has a long association with the Beaulieu Estate extending back to the time of the festivals.

On 1st December, there will be a talk on the book **Beaulieu in Tudor and Stuart Times**. This work was written by Alan Bartlett, who was the archivist of the Beaulieu Estate between 1968-80. He completed the manuscript in 1973. It has been in the Beaulieu Archives ever since in typescript form.

The book is thought to make a significant contribution to understanding the history of the area, so the society has decided to publish it in book form.

Publication has been undertaken by Ian and Gillan Strathcarron, active members of the society who run a publication house including the Unicorn imprint publishing art books. However, their work on the Bartlett book has been on a voluntary basis for which we are very grateful.

### Website

Information is being added to the society's website all the time [www.beaulieuhistorysociety.org.uk](http://www.beaulieuhistorysociety.org.uk).

The Archive section includes newsletters, presentations to the society, photo galleries, and audio recordings of meeting talks. Access to this section is restricted by login to society members only. To become a member, see the inset box at the bottom right.

John Pemberton

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## Dates for your Diary

Friday 29 September 2017 6:30pm  
**Beaulieu and all that Jazz**  
presented by Ken Robinson  
at the Lecture Theatre,  
National Motor Museum

Friday 1 December 2017 6:30pm  
**Beaulieu in Tudor and Stuart Times**  
Talk and book launch  
at Beaulieu Village Hall

## Subscriptions

Membership fees of £5 per member were due at the start of the calendar year. If you have not yet paid, you are encouraged to make an electronic bank transfer to Beaulieu History Society, sort code 20-53-53, account number 90157031. In the Reference box, please put your surname and what is being paid (membership, book, name of event), otherwise we may not know what the payment is for.

If available to you, this is a preferable alternative in cost and convenience to sending a cheque by post to the secretary Gillian Strathcarron at her address on the back page.

## Beaulieu River Sailing Club—Part Two



Andrew Duncan's talk to the society in November 2016 was a glimpse, as he described it, of some of the Beaulieu River Sailing Club's notable early figures, and of life on and around the Beaulieu River in the 1930s, the BRSC's first decade. He concentrated on the club's earliest leading lights who were not only sailors, but long term promoters or organisers of sailing, locally or on a wider stage. The 1930s had more than its fair share of original people who ploughed

their own furrow, and a remarkable number of those 1930s families still have descendants in the neighbourhood.

Many attending the talk found Andrew's portraits of the leading lights fascinating. A first extract from his talk was published in the last Newsletter No. 31 February 2017. Here is a second extract, allowing you to enjoy a further personality.

### Sir Fisher Dilke

Here is Fisher officiating at a very early BRSC regatta. He is reading out the winners while a 3 year old Lord Montagu of Beaulieu presents a prize to his mother.

Like Francis Dent and Anne Clerk, Fisher Dilke was one of the group that met informally with Pearl even before the club's formal creation in 1931.



He's elusive, difficult to conjure up, but no less interesting for that. We have among us some of his descendants - Lucilla Bogaerde, wife of Gareth, is his granddaughter. They have the lease on one of Needs Ore Cottages - but she hardly remembers Fisher because he died when she was three. His son, Lucilla's father, died aged 34 within three days of Fisher in 1944 so the usual channel for handing down memories is missing.

It's one of the best pictures in the BRSC photo album, provided by a descendant of Fisher - more in a moment.



Even his house Lepe Point has vanished, demolished I think in the 1970s. You can just about trace the foundations if you walk on the high ground above Lepe Country Park. Lucilla's grandmother was devastated of course by husband and son dying in such quick succession and Lucilla remembers as a child the atmosphere at Lepe - sad and strange. Lucilla by the way grew up at Whitehall, the charming house in Beaulieu High Street now occupied by Charles and Jo Cooke Hurle.

We do know that as a young man Fisher was open to new experiences, and adventurous.

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Here he is in 1903 travelling in Bolivia. And we know that in the first world war he fell off a horse, hit his head and was invalided out. He worked in MI5 for the rest of the war...



And here with fellow MI5 staff on the office roof, armistice day 1918. Soon after that he must have retired to Lepe, to a life of leisure, filled with his marvellous view across to Cowes, his family, boats and sailing.



Possibly, says Lucilla, he wanted to move in a different world to that of his forbears. Perhaps it suited him to keep a low profile, possibly he felt overshadowed by the family tree - for the Dilkes are indeed an interesting family - notable 19th century literary critics, liberals, intellectuals and politicians. His uncle Charles, the second Dilke baronet, an up and coming MP, had however smudged the page with a juicy scandal. He had an affair with his brother's mother in law, and was accused of seducing his brother's wife's sister. Littering the nest was even worse news than now. In the sensational divorce case which followed it was alleged among many lurid accusations that Dilke enjoyed three in a bed - and that sometimes the third person was a maid whom he taught what the newspapers called disgraceful French practices. It was as sensational as the Profumo affair of the 1960s, and Charles Dilke spent much of the family money trying to clear his name.

He was also a republican, criticizing Queen Victoria for not getting out and about enough to justify her civil list payments. Had he been around in the 1930s, would the BRSC have let him in? Good question.

Lucilla imagines Fisher as being a private man, happily married, a good diplomat - an honest broker - in the early years of the BRSC.

Read the BRSC minute book and he emerges as the one who makes the peace by coming up with intelligent compromise solutions. For instance, in 1933 the committee couldn't agree on whether it had money to spend on shoring up club quay. Fisher suggested they do half this year, and more the next. Problem solved.

One could see him helping Pearl to keep the peace among warring committee members - there were two colonels in particular who regularly tore each other's throats out.

Besides helping local sailing Fisher was becoming a bigger and bigger cheese in the yachting world beyond Beaulieu.

Here he is on the sailing committee of the RYS in the 1930s. And here is a unique object - a memento of perhaps his most respected sailing achievement



It's the box given him by Harold Vanderbilt as a thank you for serving as official observer on Ranger, the Vanderbilt yacht that beat the British entrant, Endeavour, in the Americas Cup, 1937. Fisher wrote a book about his experiences, *Observer on Ranger*, which you can still buy on Amazon.



Why was he called Fisher? The family comes from Maxstoke Castle in Warwickshire. In the 1580s a younger son married the daughter of a local landowner whose surname was Fisher. Their son was called Fisher Dilke to keep Fisher in the family. Our Fisher Dilke descends from him. Maxstoke Castle is still occupied by another branch, the Fetherstone Dilkes.

Andrew Duncan

**Further Material**

The society's website [www.beaulieuhistorysociety.org.uk](http://www.beaulieuhistorysociety.org.uk) has the full text and illustrations from Andrew Duncan's presentation on the *Beaulieu River Sailing Club* in the Archive section.

## Discovery of an Altarpiece

Gillian Strathcarron, secretary to the Beaulieu History Society, had an extraordinary surprise earlier this year. A triptych, designed and painted by Charles Sykes, and associated with Beaulieu Abbey Church was discovered in a furniture depository in Lymington.

In January I took a telephone call from a young man, Richard Pope. I did not know him and he did not know me, but he had found my name and number on the Beaulieu History Society website. He told me that while he was clearing the Langham-Browne furniture depository in Lymington, which his family had recently bought, he came across a triptych painted with a religious scene and signed Charles Sykes 1908 – 1909.

Without any clues to its provenance he went online and found references to Charles Sykes associated with Beaulieu. Diligently pursuing his research he found a copy of Captain Widnell's *The Beaulieu Record*, which recorded that in 1909 'A Painting of ye Descent from ye Cross was gratefully accepted from Lord Montagu'. However, later in the same paragraph Captain Widnell writes: 'The Sykes triptych did faithful duty until the changes



Altarpiece in Beaulieu Abbey Church, from a photograph by Edward Mudge, 1910



The altarpiece triptych photographed leaning against a wall and in poor light in the repository

wrought in 1939 by the Rev. C. G. Pearson, when it was taken down and through lack of proper storage space became so dilapidated that in the nineteen-sixties it was with deep regret honourably committed to the flames'.

I was very intrigued by this discovery and immediately got in touch with Tony Norris, the great authority on the history of Beaulieu Abbey Church. We arranged to go and see the triptych the next day and Tony explained en route that he knew Peter Langham-Browne who had been verger and sacristan in the church for a number of years.

Apparently in 1957, prior to major alterations to the church, the triptych was taken from the gallery where it had lain since 1940, to Langham-Browne's furniture depository in Lymington. Although other artefacts were later returned, because of its size (14ft x 10ft), the triptych was left in the depository. With the death of Peter Langham-Browne in 1963 it was forgotten

about and remained there untouched until 2017. Captain Widnell's assertion that it was destroyed was clearly incorrect, but it was only when the minutes of a PCC meeting in 1940 were examined that we were able to confirm that it was actually removed from the church.

We met Richard Pope and thanked him for getting in touch with us. Then he brought three large canvases from the back of the store-room and assembled them as you see in the coloured photograph. Considering they had been hidden away for nearly 70 years they were an impressive sight.

The scene shows Christ's body after it has been taken down from the Cross. His head is being cradled by a woman in a fairly modern nun's costume, presumably Mary. At his feet is a beautiful woman whose red hair tumbles down over her bare arms and shoulders; this is most likely Mary Magdalene, who is mentioned as having been at the site after Christ's crucifixion in both the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark. Another 'nun' reads a prayer book at one side and behind the group are assorted men of Middle-Eastern appearance, a sobbing woman with long black hair in red robes, a lurcher-type dog, a horse carrying a Roman soldier wearing a metal helmet and carrying a lance, and behind him other turbaned men carrying lances. Two tall ladders are laid against the middle Cross, while the other Crosses still carry the lifeless bodies of the other crucified victims. The predominant colours are the celestial blue of the sky, the deeper blue of Mary's robes and other red, pink and yellow robes. The whole ensemble has great charm. The colours look muted and pastel, but they would certainly have been brighter in the original version.

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Charles Sykes is well known to Beaulieu. He was born in Yorkshire in 1875 and grew up in Newcastle where his family were successful interior decorators and artists. A talented artist himself, he won a scholarship to study at the Royal College of Art and thereafter made his career in London and the South. Early on, he attracted the attention of Lord John Montagu, grandfather of the current Lord Montagu. He worked for Lord John as an illustrator on *The Car Illustrated* magazine and the two men became good friends. The altarpiece was his first serious commission. Later he became more famous as a sculptor and illustrator. He created the Spirit of Ecstasy mascot for Lord Montagu's Rolls-Royces, a version of which was eventually adopted for all Rolls-Royce cars.

Tony contacted Lord Montagu and he and Church Warden, Sally

Brearley, went to see the altarpiece. Although technically the property of the Parochial Church Council, it was recognised that a debt was owed to Richard Pope (and the Langham-Browne family) for having looked after it for so long. A small sum of money was paid to Richard Pope by the Parochial Church Council and the altarpiece was brought back to Beaulieu.

When I went to see the altarpiece again, currently stored in Palace House, Lord Montagu pointed out that the model for the red-haired woman in the painting was Eleanor Thornton. She was personal assistant to his grandfather at *The Car Illustrated*, also his acknowledged mistress and was the inspiration for Sykes' Rolls-Royce mascot. She died tragically in 1915 when travelling with Lord Montagu on the P&O liner SS Persia on a voyage from Marseilles to Aden, when the Persia was sunk by a torpedo from a German U Boat and 343 crew

members and passengers lost their lives.

Currently the altarpiece is being stored in Palace House until a suitable site to display it is found. The size makes it quite difficult to place. There is no plan to re-site it in the Abbey Church where it used to be, behind the altar, but we hope that one day a suitable site will be found.

'Every picture tells a story' and this altarpiece, as well as depicting a well-loved and revered scene from the Bible, tells stories of, among others, a great friendship, a doomed love affair and the changes in taste of church decoration.

Gillian Strathcarron

**Reference**

Widnell H.E.R., *The Beaulieu Record*, Pioneer Publications 1973

**St Bartholomew's Church**

At a flower festival in Beaulieu Abbey Church (15 to 17 September 2017) the history society will contribute a display based on the earlier name: St. Bartholomew's Church. Anne Coles discusses the origin of that title.

Beaulieu was associated with St Bartholomew for almost five centuries. As late as the end of the fourteenth century "... there stood on the high altar (of the monastic church) an image of the Virgin Mary wearing a silver-gilt crown set with precious stones, a gold shrine and a silver chest containing the arm of St Bartholomew" (Widnell H.E.R., *The Beaulieu Record*, Pioneer Publications 1973). In 1608, James 1st granted Henry, 3rd Earl of Southampton the right to hold a three-day fair at Bewley on the feast of St Bartholomew. It is unclear when Beaulieu church was dedicated to the saint, possibly as



St Bartholomew was martyred in 1st century AD and is often represented in works of art being skinned alive, as here

early as the time of James 1.

There are several references to St Bartholomew's Church at Beaulieu up until the late nineteenth century, including on an Ordnance Survey map.



Detail of Ordnance Survey map 1868

The fair also continued until that time when Henry, 1st Baron Montague closed it ostensibly because of "continuous riots and rowdiness" (Widnell 1973), although an alternative explanation has it that his staff, having been given the day off to attend, failed to do so.

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Change was coming. A new altar, installed in 1882, was inscribed with the church's present dedication to the 'Blessed Virgin and Child', probably at the instigation of Reverend Powles, then a curate, albeit an increasingly powerful one. Curiously the change was not reported in the newspapers or the diocesan records.

Anne Coles

Thanks to Laura Barber and Anthony Norris for their help in the preparation of this article. For a fuller discussion of the church, Anthony Norris' talk *The History of Beaulieu Abbey Church* is present on the society's website in the Archive section.



## Farewell to John Beaumont

John Robert 'Binkie' Beaumont of Braces Quay, Dock Lane, Beaulieu, will no longer be seen striding up the High Street in his plus fours and bright check sports coat, smothered with badges. No longer will he pop into the coffee shop for a coke or a hot chocolate and a bit of gossip, or stir up the parish councillors to canvass his latest campaign. John died of pneumonia following a sudden stroke in June this year. Strangely, just prior to his death, he had been telling friends that he was feeling on top of the world and that he was going to live for at least another twenty years.

John had lived alone at his waterside home for the past five years. His Swedish wife, Gloria, whom he fondly referred to as 'The Viking Raider' had died in 2012. He cared for Gloria at home with the utmost devotion when she developed Alzheimer's Disease. He took her regularly to have her hair done and kept her company even when she was bedridden and incapable of conversation. John and Gloria had a stormy relationship, having been twice married and twice divorced. Their adopted twin daughters, Fiona and Nichola, said that they could not live together but could not live without each other.

They remember John reading to them at bedtime from his favourite book 'The Wind in the Willows'. Toad of Toad Hall, they said, was his favourite character. Maybe John modelled himself on Toad, with his passionate crazes, his air of self-importance and occasional bursts of outrageous behaviour. Anyone taking tea with John in his furniture-filled sitting room, if they could negotiate their way to a chair, would find John at his desk, Gloria beside him in her day bed, being fed occasional nips of sherry. At four o'clock all conversation would cease in the room as his sixty or so clocks all chimed, rang, cuckooed or buzzed at the same time. Later, he would proudly show off a copy of his family tree



which traced the titled Beaumont family back to the Crusaders and the Middle Ages. Other passions included classic cars, gardening and anything to do with boats.

Born on 30th March 1929 (allegedly in the back of a Citroen on the way to the maternity home), John was later a pupil at Charterhouse where he was an enthusiastic member of the sailing club. A few years ago he invited the members of the Old Carthusians to attend a lavish reunion of the sailing club at his house in Beaulieu. Some arrived by boat up the Beaulieu River, but many came by car because a mighty gale blew up.

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He had laid on a garden party which included the Beaulieu Band to entertain his guests, but the rain came down and the strong wind sent the Band gazebo flying over the roof, forcing all to come inside for the sumptuous meal of oysters and salmon which he had provided.

After Charterhouse, John read history at St John's, Cambridge, changing to agriculture in his second year: he graduated with what he described as a 'gentleman's degree'. Not a lot is known about his working life – he worked for several chemical firms such as Dow Chemicals but, as his daughter Fiona says, "I think there may have been a few clashes with bosses". In 2001, after living at various times in Bosham, Bath and Dartmouth, John finally settled in Beaulieu.

Some would say he had an abrasive manner – he could be outspoken and occasionally offensive, especially in matters of planning or what he considered to be 'unfair' situations. Lady Montagu writes : "He was full of blather and bluster and loved to shock people sometimes for the sake of it – (e.g. asking impossible questions after talks while striding up the nave of Beaulieu Church)". Yet privately he had a kind and generous side to his personality. He sat as public governor on Southern NHS Foundation Trust, often supporting the causes of those he felt were needy. He was a keen supporter of the New Forest Centre in Lyndhurst. He was a great champion of the shops and shopkeepers in Beaulieu High Street, considering them to be the heart of the village.

John especially liked to encourage young people – he sponsored an outstanding young drummer who played at the village concert, helping him to go to Europe for an international competition. He donated a post horn to the Beaulieu Band so that he could have his favourite Post Horn Gallop played at the Christmas concert. Lady Montagu relates how John took it upon himself to visit her mother on a regular basis at her Lymington nursing home, signing himself in the visitors' book as 'MI6' or 'Admiral of the Fleet'. Several

of the young carers at the nursing home knew him and said how kind he had been to them.

John's computer secretary, Juliet Lynn, writes: "His behaviour could cause shock and awe .. to those that did not know him .. but John had a very soft heart and he hated to see people struggle. He would often make gifts of money to people in need that he had read about in the local paper – which he loved to read every week to make sure he was completely 'in the know'! But it wasn't just money he would give, he would give his time and his compassion. I saw John cry over the misfortune of others on more than one occasion. He would often contact them and do his best 'to sort out their problems'. After a gale, John singlehandedly re-erected Juliet's fence 'in a delightfully quirky fashion' because she could not afford a new one. She says: "It hasn't fallen down in 4 years and whenever I think about it, it makes me smile and appreciate the man for what he truly was. I'm in no rush to have that fence replaced and no-one could ever replace John Beaumont".



John at a fete in the Admiral of the Fleet costume, talking to Lady Montagu's mother. The paper mask of the Duke of Edinburgh is a striking resemblance to John

John, however might have wished his lasting memorial to be the foundation in 2007 of his beloved Beaulieu History Society. It is now a flourishing, well-attended association of local people who care about their local history. Before attending a Society lecture, John made sure that he knew as much as the visiting lecturer on any particular historical subject, researching the material in a scholarly fashion as he did with any project he undertook. He would invariably lead the question session after the talk hoping, perhaps, to display superior knowledge!

John was a bit of an actor – he regularly won the village fête competition for best fancy dress. He was also a bit of a show-off – he loved to be noticed. But those who knew him well recognise the kindness and compassion beneath the bluster. What an ebullient, colourful character he was.

Rosemary Johnson

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